



# The Meridian

The newsletter of the  
Quad Cities Astronomical Society

May 2009

<http://www.qcas.org>

---

## April Meeting Minutes

Joe Bannon

Members in attendance at the meeting:

Steve VanHyfte  
Dana Taylor

Craig Cox  
Karl Adlon

Joe Bannon  
Jay Cunningham

Brian Haysbrook  
John Waack

Jim Rutenbeck  
Cecil Ward

Dana opened the meeting with a review of old business. He's spoken with Eric Clifton of the Peoria Astronomical Society about visiting their observatory outside of town where they have a 24" scope. Members discussed visiting on Friday, June 19, with a rain date of June 20. Dana will try to firm up these dates with Eric. Dana also has been in touch with the Cedar Rapids astronomy club and will see if a similar opportunity can be scheduled. (For more details see Presidential Ramblings.)

The event at the Family Museum was confirmed on Saturday, May 2. Joe will be there and Karl is tentatively planning to attend as well. Solar observing, looking through a telescope at a distant object, the "solar system in a bag" and a slide show will be used. Joe will finalize plans with Glenn Boyles, the Family Museum contact.

New business included a reminder that Saturday, April 24 is the first public star party. Joe asked if the notes in the county conservation boards' newsletters include something about "weather permitting." No one was sure and Joe was to follow up with the boards. (*Joe contacted both and one responded without saying whether this information was included or not. A proposal was sent to the QCAS Web master to see if something could be added to the Web site on the day of a public star party that tells whether the event will be held. The newsletters could then include a note to refer to the Web site to see if the weather is forcing a cancellation.*)

Steve confirmed that he's updated the state forms confirming the club's non-profit status and updating the officers. As part of the update, he put his name as the contact so future requests will be sent to someone who's been through the process.

A presentation followed, courtesy of John, who brought a video on the Vatican observatory. Originally located at Vatican City, it now has a relationship with the observatories at the University of Arizona, where John formerly worked. The video not only highlighted questions of philosophy and science, but also a mirror casting facility

built under the university's football stadium. A rotating furnace can make a 26" mirror while significantly cutting construction time. John even brought a piece of borosilicate glass used to make these mirrors.

---

## Presidential Ramblings

Dana Taylor

Road Trip Update: At the April meeting the membership decided to visit the Decker-Grebner-Van Zandt Observatory, otherwise known as "Jubilee" observatory, owned by the Peoria Astronomical Society (PAS). The observatory is located in Jubilee College State Park about 20 miles northwest of Peoria. The two main scopes there are a 24-inch, f/4 Newtonian and a 14-inch Schmidt-Cassegrain. The objective mirror for the 24-inch was ground, polished and figured by Art Grebner, the same person that originally built our 20-inch scope. The 24" is an impressive instrument with full computer control designed by the club members.

I have contacted Eric Clifton of PAS, and we are tentatively set for Friday, June 19<sup>th</sup> with a rain date of Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup>. The reason I say tentatively is that they are currently having some intermittent drive controller issues with the 24-inch. Hopefully, I will have more info in time for the May meeting. For more info on the PAS please visit their web site (<http://www.astronomical.org>).

A Bit of Trivia: Did you know that there is no channel 37 in the UHF television frequency band? It seems that that frequency was turned over to the radio astronomers so they would have a range of frequencies in that part of the radio spectrum. Here's a [link](#) to more info.

Recent Discovery: NASA announced that the Swift satellite has detected the most distant gamma ray burst ever. The burst lasted for ten seconds and it was determined that it originated when the universe was only 630 million years old. That would put it at a distance of approximately 13.1 billion light years. More info can be found [here](#).

And, Just One More Interesting Tidbit: Scientists have discovered what can only be described as a giant mystery blob located at a distance of approximately 12.9 billion light years. They believe it may be a remnant of very early galaxy formation. Click here for more info on the [mystery blob](#).

Well, that's all for now. Clear Skies!

---

## Observations

Karl Adlon

### Some Reminders

**New Batteries!** A new season is upon us. I pointed my laser pointer into the sky and it looked a little dim. Popped new batteries in and it blazed in new glory. Now, what else needs new batteries?

**NOW is the Time!** Seems every year I'm out observing in August and September and I'm wondering why I didn't get better views of Scorpio earlier. That's because I didn't observe it in the early, early morning hours of May. C'mon weekend! Clouds go away!

**Know Before You Go!** I keep telling myself and I keep forgetting [not a good sign] – before you go to a star party, look up the visible satellites (use the link on the Clear Sky Chart), download "Sky Tonight" from the

Hubble website if the public will be there and it might be cloudy, see what moons of Saturn and/or Jupiter are visible, etc.

**Warm Clothes!** You probably don't need to be reminded, but if you ask novices out, "remind" that that it's colder at night, especially if you are just standing around. Tell them to bring a sweater, jacket or coat. They WILL thank you later.

**"Go" Before You Go!** Remind members of the public that there are no "facilities" at our facility and it's a long way to anywhere. OK – now I remember that we might be able to use the basement facilities at the house.

**Bring a Drink!** I remember that I once forgot to bring a bottle of water or a can of pop (it's "pop"; not "soda" – "soda" is what you add to your scotch). You'll have to imagine how happy I was when someone mentioned they had brought a cooler of pop and did I want one?

**Stupid stuff!** Don't forget the little necessities. Parts (I once forgot the wedge-to-tripod bolts). Red flashlight. White flashlight (for finding things you didn't even know you dropped). Cell phone. Music for the ride home. Paper and pencil (you never know what you want to write down). QCAS fliers (not to hand out like candy but to have available for interested people who may ask about the club). Bug spray. A hat. Maybe some gloves. What else?

I hope this helps you think of everything and anything you need to get your observing season really going. I know I'm itching for some clear, dark nights.

---

## Upcoming Celestial and Club Events

May 17	AM – Shadows of Io and Callisto visible on Jupiter simultaneously
May 19	Monthly meeting – Deere-Wiman carriage house starting at 7:30
May 20	AM – Jupiter south of Mu Capricorni; Neptune $0.6^{\circ}$ to the left
May 21	Dawn – Moon, Venus and Mars form a $6^{\circ}$ equilateral triangle
May 25-29	AM – Jupiter less than 25' south of Neptune (7.9 mag.)
May 27	Sunset - Castor, Pollux and crescent Moon in western horizon
May 29-30	Moon is $5^{\circ}$ below Regulus on the 29 <sup>th</sup> and $8^{\circ}$ below Saturn on the 30 <sup>th</sup>
<b>May 30</b>	<b>Public Star Party at Jens-Wendt Observatory</b>

Jens-Wendt Observatory – Quad Cities Astronomical Society – Located at Sherman Park in Dixon, Iowa

Monsignor Menke Observatory – St. Ambrose University – Located at Wapsi River Environmental Education Center in Dixon, Iowa

---

# QCAS Contacts

Elected Officers			Volunteers and Committees		
President	Dana Taylor	<a href="mailto:dana@nelsontaylor.com">dana@nelsontaylor.com</a>	Facilities	Jim Rutenbeck	<a href="mailto:jim@qonline.com">jim@qonline.com</a>
Vice-president	Chris Hebel	<a href="mailto:Chrishebel57@yahoo.com">Chrishebel57@yahoo.com</a>	Web Master	Dana Taylor	<a href="mailto:dana@nelsontaylor.com">dana@nelsontaylor.com</a>
Secretary	Joe Bannon	<a href="mailto:mzbannon@aol.com">mzbannon@aol.com</a>	Outreach	Joe Bannon	<a href="mailto:qcas@mchsi.com">qcas@mchsi.com</a>
Treasurer	Steve VanHyfte	<a href="mailto:vanhyfte@mchsi.com">vanhyfte@mchsi.com</a>	Programming	Jim Rutenbeck	<a href="mailto:jim@qonline.com">jim@qonline.com</a>
Director	Karl Adlon	<a href="mailto:kmja79@mchsi.com">kmja79@mchsi.com</a>			

All other contacts can be sent to the club at P.O. Box 3706, Davenport, IA, 52808.

Members are also reminded that anyone can submit articles for *The Meridian*. Submit articles to Joe Bannon at [jbannon@midamerican.com](mailto:jbannon@midamerican.com) and [mzbannon@aol.com](mailto:mzbannon@aol.com).

---